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Threads in a granite landscape

By Peter Scupham

ELIZABETH DARYUSH:
Collected Poems
Introduction by Donald Davie
198pp. Carcanet New Press. £3.25.

Elizabeth Daryush, the daughter of Robert Bridges, was born in 1887. Her *Collected Poems*, more accurately "that fraction of her poetic oeuvre which she wishes to preserve," is a relatively short book; it comes with a crisp, decisive preface by Donald Davie, a kind of "mea-culpa-maxima culpa" for the lack of critical interest her work has met. Her admirers, notably Ivor Winters and Roy Fuller, have drawn select attention to her poetry which have become associated with experiments in syllabic measures. This technical concern, though fascinating, can subvert a response which should be given to the total tone and effect of this enigmatic and rewarding writer.

Elizabeth Daryush compels the reader to accept a world conditioned by several qualities rarely found in contemporary poetry. The world is self-sufficient, persuading the reader of its validity by the stern insistence of a diction as aptly coined as that of de la Mare, a true sense of cadence as timeless as that of Jonson or Herrick, a firm moral sense. Professor Davie points out that we are often willing to accept vigorous speech at the cost of evidence. It is willing to accept archaism for a felicitous music. In the world Elizabeth Daryush creates, though the eye at first refuses the run of epithets, seemingly as locked into an obsolete tradition—bona fide, however, as the poems make the impossible probable. Not only is there a surface play and dazzle drawn from a full-blown romantic tradition, there is a further cluster of words from the world of Hardy: dream, form, doomful. And the poetry does not merely survive this: it triumphs, and triumphs not in spite, but because, of this apparently synthetic usage.

The primal cause for this success is the complete integrity of tone, the absolute conviction that what Mrs Daryush says, with the bedrock of felt and pondered experience which her persistence in the craft has made into a true, unfashionable art. In her words, "not only a work of art but every aspect of the medium is intrinsically a contrived relation between the fixed and the unpredictable." The craft and the experience certify one another. And, as Auden says in *The Dyer's Hand*: "In literature, as in life, attention, passionately adopted and loyally persevered in, is one of the chief forms of self-discipline by which mankind has raised itself by its own bootstraps." Attention, moreover: these words are not to be used as postures when one confronts the work of Emily Dickinson, Stevie Smith, Elizabeth Daryush. The quirks and turns of language are not additions and accretions, but a way of looking which has become second nature, both face and mask.

Felt, and pondered, experience. Yet Elizabeth Daryush is a singer, a poet of lyrical temperament, whose lines are perspicuous. A kind of lapidary clarity announces her themes, and over and again poems open with an exactitude where the words create spaces about themselves. Autumn, dark wanderer, lured here once more. Gravel crumpled again in our light wood.

Doomed sun, who to yourself so tensely draw The flying planets of your phantom moon.

It is only after the poem has drawn one through its own questions and decisions that one feels, rereading, the accurate force and balance of the epithets: the sense that words have been weighed and placed as bricks in a well-ruled course. Her world is largely the world of nature, seasonal variation, the play of the elements: a world worked closely by human thought and passion. Into its deceptively "sure landscapes come sudden poems of sharp and sober focus, this intrusion to the "Children of weight" in your warm nursery" to test for

themselves the meaning of deprivation, their security itself being only illusion, and the extraordinary "News-reel", where the reader is imprisoned with the poet in the intense verticals and horizontal interiors of a blazing building, a "glare of waltzlight": these are both sonnets of distinction.

It would be wrong, though tempting, to focus on such poems in isolation. One of the strengths of this collection is the way in which it can, possibly should be read as a controlled gathering of force, from the initial announcements of theme and task:

But he whose paints are only rich words,
his tunes but twining thoughts, said:
These vines. I see not how, though
I trained or pruned them as best I
where gladness shone, knew
sorrow's stream flowed,
I found them, and beside the worn
road.

to the final poem in the book, "The Birchwood", a meditation on a water-colour, in which a bridge of pine-log links, with one positive gesture of paint, would only partly visible, while crossing a gulf of further imprisonment. Yet the bridge is a bridge: the image one of transit, not one of cul-de-sac as in Van Gogh's "Cornfield".

When these poems are read against each other it is apparent that the lyric graces are threads

The wearing of the rue

By John Mole

JOHN HEWITT:
Time Enough
36pp. Blackstaff Press. £1.50.

ALASDAIR MACLEAN:
Waking the Dead
79pp. Collaunce. £2.95.

CLIFF ASHBY:
The Dogs of Dewsbury
47pp. Carcanet New Press. £2.

CHRISTOPHER MORGAN:
The Fire Jump and Other Poems
79pp. Brynmill. £1.95.

ANGUS NICOLSON, VALENTINE OWEN, JAMES SUTHERLAND-SMITH, GEORGINA HAMMOND, and I. F. TAYLOR:
A Poetry Quiltet
95pp. Collaunce. £3.20.

We pick our path among
appearances,
and wisdom safely lies in cautious
doubt.

John Hewitt has always drawn attention to the virtue of caution, and this most recent collection, *Time Enough*, reinforces one's impression of a poet whose appreciation of "complicated ambiguity" is inseparable from the unhurried skill with which he pieces it together. It would be wrong to see him merely as a dogged four-square craftsman; he is fully aware of what, in an earlier poem, he calls "the threat behind the dream" and his work acknowledges its existence in both the private and social spheres, often coincidentally.

Kicking a ragged ball from lamp to lamp,
In close November dusk, my head
not yet aware the room had
drifted off,
I collided with a stiffly striding
man.
He cursed. I stumbled, glimpsing
his sharp face,
his coat brushed open and a rifle
held
close to his side. That image has
the shape of fear that waits each
of us, in the dark.

So much of the effect here, lies in the ironically gentle phrases "brushed open"—the true poetry's ability to surprise, which is evident throughout this new book. Or rather, this book of new and revised poems which are not as previously,

scanning a granite landscape. Underneath their audiences work a personality brooding on checked intensities, confronting us with a flint morality and a sense of heaven less securely based than a sense of hell. The underlying discourse is that late Victorian dialogue with a Creator more sinning than sinned against, felt in his absence. Arnold, Tennyson, Hardy, the Hopkins of the *Carcanet* sonnets; these great voices add to the making of Mrs Daryush's world. The lack of precision in the mandates of the Godhead gives no excuse for his creatures devising flexible moralities of their own. The firm moral sense is not found in the form of a categorical epigraph: it is always implicit in the structure of the poem itself. Moral diagnostics may come in the form of a poem whose blank dedication "For—" invites the reader to make his own nominee. Usually he finds he has supplied his own name. More frequently Mrs Daryush tightens her own resolve, reserving her compassion for others, her strictures for herself. She forces the attendant ill of life to serve, as in her consciousness of the necessity to make "sorrow and care" points of future growth:

Since you'll not leave me, this at
least I'll drive you to—
Work for my betterment; this shall
you do for me:
Widen in time my window, better
till I see
Further than formerly down some
sad street. . . .
This tone strengthens as the

set in chronological order but, as Mr Hewitt points out in a *Poetry* Book Society Bulletin, "can fairly be considered verses which in my sixtieth year represent my moods, thoughts, imaginings, recollections, now." Again, that fairly is typical of his approach; scrupulous in his own practice and thus fair to the reader.

His weakness, it seems, connects with his gift for clear statement and can be seen, for example, in "The Spring Restored". After eight stanzas of marvellous description which—quote from another poem—"exemplify a texture of colour, shape, and nothing else" he feels obliged to insist in the final line that "somewhat the act was allegorical." The allegory, though, has been implicit in the poem's success up to this point; the significance does not have to be laboured—it looks like a last-minute failure of nerve.

Mr Hewitt needs the imaginative courage to stand by that "nothing else", and perhaps it has to be admitted that there is a little timidity in his caution, although the best poems in *Time Enough* are not bound up in this way and are among the most memorable he has written. "The Milla Louisa" of mine is "The Milla Louisa" of mine and I'm sorry to find that in this beautifully rhythmic little piece the word-order of the first line has been nudged by the printers, and its delicate metric marred.

Alasdair MacLean is a theatrical poet, and there's no denying that he produces effective theatre. His theme is death, as is stated uncompromisingly from the outset in "Ty My Reader". Similarly, in his previous volume, he began with a calculated address and moved onward to "the point where the language bends with determined energy and imagination." Why, then, have reservations when Mr MacLean is obviously, a good writer, strikes many fine images, shows a remarkable sense of balance within long rhyming stanzas, and is prepared to reveal himself as accessibly human? It must be something to do with the strenuous drama. About halfway through *Waking the Dead* I was aware of feeling rather as if I was reading the text of Peter Shaffer's play *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* after having been extremely impressed by it in performance. What troubled me was all those long speeches of Pizarro's about morality, brilliantly metaphorical but rather remote from the metaphor of death, and too highly coloured, designed to be more like Pizarro, Mr MacLean is out in

Christopher Morgan's *The Fire Jump and Other Poems* is appealingly set by a typewriter which skips and squashes its way across the page, depositing letters at random. This may (for some) be acceptable in a cyclostyled broadsheet but is to be deplored in a book costing nearly two pounds.

Your might-through-heffling, you
gladness-through-grief decree,
We gratefully acknowledge; we are
as our maker your gooding
control.

Yet attain but exhaustion and
awe.
The poem is crabbed, dogged, in
by memorable lines, though Elizabeth Daryush cannot drive her search through with such a high sense of drama or so fierce a poetic voltage as Hopkins brings to his triumph of Christ the Victor.

It would be foolish to value the book as a curiosity, the work of a literary survivor. The poems do not speak readily to ears tuned by Greek music; one could wish that the clusters of stanzas—properties in Daryush has made her own space more often on such exactitudes as this, from "Rainbow at Dawn":

Lost in the plain's ring were the
leaving plinths that held
the past mastered ring.
But an obvious distinction of mind
and heart has gone to the making
of these poems, a fastidious, determined talent. We have a debt to those critics who have known this before us, and to Carcanet New Press who have been publishing her work for some time. Elizabeth Daryush, though, should have a last word:

Visit not often the past that bore
you,
nor the too-friendly pleasures
your gate,
nor your soul's offspring wailed in
their fate.
Keep your house, the every need
of those to come, your works yet
to be born;
toll, plan and play for them now,
night and morn.

Robert Lacey says, near the beginning of his book, that more people dream of the Queen—than of the Queen. Elizabeth, anybody else? I should doubt if there is anybody in this realm, except perhaps Mr Willie Hamilton, who has not at some time dreamt of the Queen. I have myself dreamt of her four times. Most of the dreams, says Mr Lacey, are about having sex with the Queen. I should think, though I have no means of proving this, that a great number of them are erotic. This is altogether in order. Elizabethan love-fantasies—centring on a glorified, even when she was beyond being able to tolerate mirrors, were probably not in sincere but rather acknowledged the great Partridgean *cu-truth*. At the time of Victoria's coronation Dickens declared himself "madly in love with the Queen." This is the only piece of sexual candour to be found in all of Dickens's writing.

British republicans who point to the importance of a constitutional monarch and argue for an elected presidency miss, or are not poetical enough to value, the other, mythical potency. Citizens of actual republics value it highly enough. There are New York taxi-drivers who believe that "your Queen owns half the real estate in Manhattan", and as for property in the borough of Queens—"well, where ya think it got the name 'Queens'?" Give a lecture at a women's college in the United States—on, say, the Great Vowel Shift—and you will get questions about the Royal Family. *Queen and queen* come in nicely there, but in a more serious context, the Queen is required to be a woman of not hard to invent, and, though Mr Lacey gives us what anecdotes he can in *Majesty*, the best must always be apocryphal. That too is in order, like the erotic dreams. 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Putting the pope in his place

By John Roberts

FRANCO VENTURI:
Settecento riformatore
Volume 2. La Chiesa e la Repubblica dentro i loro limiti 1758-1774
350pp. Turin: Einaudi. L.10,000.

No one knows so much about eighteenth-century thought as Franco Venturi. Dazzling as his incursions into Russian populism and modern historiography may be, he will be longest admired and remembered for what he has done for the history of the Enlightenment. One explanation of his richness and penetration in this area is his very personal approach. When he can, he seizes and follows a thread of contemporary debate, finding in it the backbone and articulation for an exposition of the characteristics of a place or period. His books are full of ample summaries of polemics, generously buttressed by quotation. Probably no phase of Western intellectual history since the age of the Fathers lends itself so well as the Enlightenment to a discussion of this kind: few have produced such concentrated and well-focused debate about their central concerns. The age can therefore speak for itself through Professor Venturi's pages. He enjoys exposition and textual analysis rather than reflective or critical writing, and this suits a literature which embeds arguments that, even when they are more than fleshed-out versions of abstract principles, still manoeuvre confidently about fixed intellectual points, generating a sense of coherent, continuous interchange.

The vast range of Professor Venturi's learning and reading is his other special qualification. The eighteenth-century debate was largely conducted by obscure men lost to sight; some of them, too, were pretty second-rate; enthusiasm is needed to bring to light what they said after the public judgment of two centuries has buried them. Professor Venturi's discrimination is a great reassurance that someone other than antiquarians can benefit from looking at them, and it is based on a depth of knowledge which must make other scholars sigh with regret that they have never had time to do so. The method, combined with the learning, can be very stimulating; the reader is always being taken into new territory by Professor Venturi, and however dull his mind may be, his own enthusiasm is infectious. The French sense of the word, he is emphatically "engaged" on one side of the debate he reports; a sympathy for progressive rationalism gives drive to his narrative, even when he has to move from prose far less enchanting than that of Voltaire and ideas far less exciting than those of Rousseau.

This book (his latest) is for many purposes self-contained, but it is in fact the second of three volumes on the theme of reform in the Enlightenment. The complete work may be regarded as Professor Venturi's most comprehensive statement about the Enlightenment as a whole, as well as a commentary on its specific expression in demands for practical reform. Like the first volume, this one leaves us in no doubt about the conclusions of a life of research on this topic, but it does so almost incidentally, by the discussion of a very specific theme, the demand for reform in Italy, for the most part, in the 1760s. Other themes are dealt with, but Italian writers provide most of the evidence. The title does not make this clear and its appropriateness is only evident after reading the book (unless, of course, as already acquainted with the enormous work of 1768 from which it is borrowed).

The central problem for would-be Italian reformers, even more than for their equivalents in other countries, was the Roman Church: its demographic and economic preponderance could be paralleled elsewhere—in Spain, for instance—but the papacy had been interwoven with the history of Italy and the Italian state system, which is antedated for so long and so deeply

that the consequent intertwining of secular and sacred, civil and ecclesiastical power, was unequalled in any other country. It was an excellent idea to mark out this target-area with a contemporary phrase—"dentro i loro limiti"—which so precisely outlines the eighteenth-century reformers' basic approach: the demarcation and delimitation of spheres, in spite of the Machiavellian and Rousseauian hints of subordination of church to state found in the writings of some of them. It is also interesting to note the difference in import of this phrase and that of a different, but equally concise (and more famous) programme of the following century: "libera chiesa in libero stato".

The book opens not in Italy but in Portugal. The Jesuits were expelled from that country and its possessions in 1759; five years later, their society was abolished as a corporation in France. This may reasonably be seen as the opening of the worst decade for the Church in the modern world, the 1760s and the 1790s. These events are of interest to Professor Venturi not directly, but because of the hopes they generated in Italy. They led to the formulation and widespread diffusion of charges which were to be repeated and elaborated until the society was dissolved by the Bull of 1773.

To a remarkable degree, every lobby had something against the Jesuits. (The French writer La Chalotais appears in these pages offering a fascinating explanation of the "move means voice" argument with reference to Jesuit education.) Not all the writings of their enemies rested on philosophical principles, as Professor Venturi makes clear, and this affected the general shape of the reforming propaganda. As the reform movement broadened to encompass more than the overthrow of the Jesuits there flowed into it old Jansenist currents, the *giurisdizionalismo* of

some Italian courts and intellectuals, and the vague, faintly intellectual impulses which emanated from writers who invoked the name of Sarpi.

Given the breadth of the attack by the time of Clement XIV's accession and the diversity of the sources from which it flowed, it is surprising that Clement was lucky in that the unpopularity of the Jesuits provided him with so satisfactory a sacrificial offering. Badly as the reputations of the other regular clergy, the Holy Office, canon law and even papal authority itself suffered during the 1760s, the Jesuits conducted at least some of the lightning away from them, and enough perhaps to be decisive. At the beginning of the decade they were already identified as the whipping-bags for all ecclesiastical shortcomings; from the point of view of the enlightened thinker, they were the great obstacle to what he wanted and became the demons of progressive mythology, thought to be frustrating the reforming impulse. "Bacono da Verulano, l'umore chiericistico degli italiani" by their very existence (let alone their special economic, educational and moral institutions).

In the central and largest section of his book (six chapters out of twelve) Professor Venturi traces in detail the development of such currents into a broader demand for reform in Italy. The word "reform" itself did not loom as large in the discussions of innovators in other countries, and that fact itself suggests its special resonance in the peninsula, where the Counter-Reformation had gone deep. He examines the advocacy of anticlerical policies in different states, focusing the debate in the end on Parma, the duchy which quarrelled with the Papacy finally brought into action the diplomacy of the Bourbon courts of France and Spain and the French Revolution which ended with the 1773 Bull.

There follow two more chapters, each devoted to one thinker, Cosimo Amidei, who is identified

beyond reasonable doubt as the anonymous author of *La Chiesa e la Repubblica dentro i loro limiti*; and Carlo Antonio Filati, the publisher of whose *Di una riforma d'Italia* in 1767 is for Professor Venturi not only the major statement of *giurisdizionalismo* in that decade, but the outstanding work of an author whose activity generated a more varied and broadly based criticism of the church-state problem in Italy than was formulated anywhere else. He closes with a comment on the sense of anticlimax left by this survey of the ground. What was achieved was less than what many of the reformers had hoped for, and owed as much to diplomatic and administrative pressures as to their urgings.

Throughout this account, the reader is immersed—and has the sense of immersion which the author is so skilled at conveying—in the debates of the age. This makes it easier to appreciate the seemingly obsessive quality of many of the writings Professor Venturi brings to our notice. As a study in depth of propaganda the book is rather one-sided, for little time is spent on the replies the reformers generated except where these are assessed in order to understand the drift of the reformers' arguments. The complexity of the issues is not shirked and this makes the difficulties of establishing a way of proceeding in reform very apparent. It was not merely a question of priorities among reforms—education or moral reform?—but of the priority of reform above other goals (especially when it suggested a questioning of fundamentals) and of its essential nature. Notably in the discussion of Venetian light is thrown on the limits to reform thought reasonable even by those who sympathized in general and would go some way with particular steps. So rich is the material deployed by Professor Venturi that it is tempting to say that the case of the

Italian reformers has never been presented so completely and sympathetically and that it will probably not need to be done again on this scale.

Even so, much escapes the mesh. Little sense of personality comes through, except in the case of Filati; Professor Venturi's subjects are published work; this is, emphatically, the history of ideas, not men. And even ideas are considered in a narrow (if important) sense. We do not learn much about whether the various books were actually read; we are told that the arguments on both sides went deep, but this is to be taken merely as implied by the omnipresence of the clergy in Italy, is hard to see in the past, Professor Venturi has taken issue with French historians who have tried, perhaps too vigorously, to reduce questions of intellectual history to the mere statistical knowledge about the consumption of intellectual articles. The criticisms he made were to the point (as well as provocative), but in this book it would have been interesting to get beyond the arguments of other intellectuals and reviewers and into the world of the library, the bookseller and the publisher. When, almost incidentally, Professor Venturi does this, in order to pursue the fate of a particular text with Filati, he turned to publishing, or the untimely Roman bookseller, Feltrinelli, the results suggest that there is a whole new area of Italian Enlightenment studies awaiting attention. We know little that is precise except at a textual level about the means by which ideas were transmitted, and the public they reached. Nor do we know anything very solid about Italian levels of literacy.

Even within the limits Professor Venturi has set himself one might say for more than this purely literary account. In particular, there are two notable classes of data which readers might hope to be introduced to, but which are not considered, though for different reasons. The first is the background information which would help us to make some assessment of the context in which the debate over reform was conducted. It is

no use expecting to find in these pages even an elementary account of chronology or, for example, the steps by which the Jesuits were expelled from France, or the contours of Pombal's legislation. Such facts are taken as read as Professor Venturi considers the commonplaces made upon them by contemporary writers; but not all the comments are really comprehensible and some cannot be evaluated unless the facts are clearly present in the reader's mind. A reader of this book must be prepared to refer to others.

More serious, perhaps, is the absence of any systematic (as opposed to sporadic and incidental) account of what reforms were actually effected. We get a very summary but reasonably complete account for Parma, but virtually nothing, much to be regretted, for instance, how Tanucci responded to the situation at Naples. Yet the motives and preoccupations of the "men of business" (to import an exotic term) in each state who had to grapple with the balance of forces determining the expression of reform in legislation are of the greatest importance. They guide us towards an evaluation of the validity and relevance of what the reformers had to say. This omission seems to be a direct reflection of Professor Venturi's method; he has gone straight for the published form of the arguments and only occasionally, when this research has led him to a bundle of administrative papers, do we get any further (this happens to some extent in the case of Parma, and a little with regard to Venice). For the most part, though, our only glimpse of politics and administration is through the literary sources quoted incidentally, or through the letters of one of Professor Venturi's chosen authors.

This may have cost him and ourselves some good topics. In the end, the view of church-state problems which we get is always that of literary and legal intellectuals (we may hear more about scientists, perhaps, in the next volume). Yet Professor Venturi is not unaware of possibilities lying to either side of his chosen path. Popular religion, for example, does not appear in his pages as such, but there are brief comments on the roots of the phenomenon of *Sanfedismo* which are highly interesting and suggestive. But Professor Venturi is remarkably faithful to his texts, recapitulating them simply even when this reveals how boring and repetitive they are (see the account of Denina). This fidelity to the material sometimes leaves him with little to say when no text is available or when the working of the text does not always reveal its full nature.

Such considerations confirm that this is a very individual book. Professor Venturi actually seems to regret it when (as in the case of Tuscany) the reformers' debate is embedded in detailed policies, so that discussion is very specific and little general argument is generated. For all this "rate qualification" it is clear that Venice has a special affection; too this view "Enlightenment" take on a positive connotation, thus expressing a mutation in historical outlook linked in a diffuse way to the general advance of the sciences.

The concluding chapters of the book contain interesting and subtle discussions of the connections between the shrinking influence of Christianity and the advance of science, and of the significance of evolutionary theory. Professor Chadwick reverts only briefly to the themes with which he introduced this work: the usefulness of the concept of secularization in modern history, and the influence of sociology upon the historical study of religion. Frequent allusion is made to the writings of Comte, Durkheim and Max Weber; there is a long chapter specifically devoted to Marx. But having read through the work I am still puzzled about what importance Professor Chadwick believes should be attached to theories of religion, and what contribution these might make to the study of secularization. He does comment, almost in passing, on Weber's notion of "disenchantment", remarking that we must be as cautious in playing it as we have to in talking of secularization. A proper caution in the face of such embracing terms is all very well, but anyone attempting to confront a broad sweep of historical change unavoidably has the obligation of providing a systematic and explicit discussion of them.

tribution to the bibliography of enlightenment reform is larger than that of other states? Whether or not this is so, it must be acknowledged that one of the advantages of Professor Venturi's way of setting about his task is that we learn from him a great deal about the variety of the roots and therefore of the subsequent nature of reforming impulses in different parts of Italy. Venice, for example, had a more tenacious and community-conscious tradition of *giurisdizionalismo* than other states; and drew on springs remote in time (Sarpi) and place (the Eastern Orthodox impulse) to be felt in the writings of the Augustinian Bina. In Genoa, another commercial republic, the fiscal preoccupations of most of the early anti-clerical measures are more obvious, while in Piedmont a quiet distinction between church and state was better established than anywhere else in the peninsula.

Examples of this variety could be multiplied, but they do not, for Professor Venturi, convey the essential unity of his topic. He does not conceal his own personal involvement in the debate which he narrates, and this, too, draws him to the documents which expound its most general issues. This is, as I have said, a committed reflection of Professor Venturi's method; he has gone straight for the published form of the arguments and only occasionally, when this research has led him to a bundle of administrative papers, do we get any further (this happens to some extent in the case of Parma, and a little with regard to Venice). For the most part, though, our only glimpse of politics and administration is through the literary sources quoted incidentally, or through the letters of one of Professor Venturi's chosen authors.

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Foundations

This summer the sun shone hard for the new hotel: wind that kept clouds high overhead dried scrubland powder on top as pepper where digging began.

But now they are twenty feet down, and the obdurate city holds them fast, sucking spades, shoes, anything, barrows even, deep under its own thick territory.

All month I've seen men tunnel themselves in like its first discoverers I was going to say, except that today a group suddenly stood back pointing where

relics of two fish lay coiled in rock, salmon, which swam this field before its clay came there, or anyone ever looked down through the immense air.

Andrew Motion

New Books

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Translated by Apostolos N. Athanassiakis

This new line-by-line translation is reliable, imaginative, free of stylistic contortions and above all unpretentiously elegant and clear. Johns Hopkins, 107 pages, £6.80

AECHYLEAN DRAMA

Michael Gagarin

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In keeping with the interdisciplinary focus of Mead's work, scholars of diverse fields—anthropology, sociology, psychology and primatology—write on topics related to the theme of socialization and communication. California, 260 pages, £12.00

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thinking and reading of high intelligence and sensibility. I remained troubled, though, by the great distance that separates the contributors' ways of reading and making sense of novels from that of the general, non-specialist community of novel-readers, still a large body if not as large as it was. Sooner or later these new and subtle, intellectually exciting ways of looking at fiction will have to be transmitted beyond the academy, in some ambitious, unimaginable act of *haute vulgarization*.

Fin-de-siècle in Finland

By J. M. Richards

JOHN BOULTON SMITH:
The Golden Age of Finnish Art
175pp. Helsinki: Otava. Paperback,
149 Markka.

What nobleman, who lived to be 70, married the sister of a field-marshal who later became president of his country, studied art in Paris with what painter who was a close associate of what celebrated composer, and was admired by what equally celebrated Russian impresario, and visited the proprietor of what influential art magazine at what house built by what pioneer socialist in Kent?

The answer is the Swedish Count Louis Sparre (1853-1964), and the purpose of the rest of the book is not to mystify for the sake of a thing so but to underline the extraordinary international ramifications of the artistic world in Finland at the turn of the century, which is the subject of this book. Sparre, settled when young in Paris, was nearly all the rest of his life, in Finland. His wife was the sister of Marshal Mannerheim. His closest friend, whom he had met at the Académie Julian, was the Finnish painter Akseli Gallen-Kallela, who was also a close friend of the painter who painted many portraits of, Sibelius, and whose pictures were shown in exhibitions promoted by Diaghilev. When Sparre visited England in 1896 he called on Charles Holme, proprietor of *The Studio*, at William Morris's Red House at Bexley, Kent, which Holme had recently bought.

This English visit had significant results—more significant perhaps than John Boulton Smith allows. The Red House had marked the launching of the Arts and Crafts movement in England and was still one of its most potent expressions. *The Studio* in the 1890s was that movement's chief supporter and disseminator, publishing the work of the English architects and designers who carried it forward into the twentieth century: Voysey and Baillie Scott, Ernest Newton, Ashbee and Walter Crane. On the same visit Sparre also called at Liberty's, the shop whose furnishings and textiles initiated such widespread changes in taste that the equivalent of Art Nouveau in Italy is still known as the *Stile Liberty*.

Sparre brought a lot of new notions and attitudes back to Finland, which took root and blossomed. One of the most characteristic results, the group of houses and studios at Viipuri and Bexley, west of Helsinki, which trio of young architects, Gessellius, Lindgren and Saarinen, designed for their own occupation in 1902 (and which Mr Boulton Smith justly describes as "the pioneer place of Art Planning" and "a treasure-house of the best in Finnish art-nouveau design") might, as regards the buildings, have been designed by Baillie Scott, except for a Karelian vernacular detail, and as regards much of the furnishing by Charles Rennie Mackintosh himself.

But this is to anticipate matters, because before it became an aesthetic movement the Finnish fin-de-siècle renaissance of the arts was a political one, and as a result of this also a linguistic one. Mr Boulton Smith summarizes briefly but clearly the tug-of-war between Swedish cultural influence and Russian political domination out of which the nationalistic Finnish art movement emerged. He is compelled to go back to 1809 when Finland, having been part of Sweden since the fourteenth century, was captured by Russia and declared a Grand Duchy of the Russian empire under the personal rule of the Tsar. The capital was transferred from Åbo to Helsinki to remove it from Swedish influence, and at first the language of the majority of ordinary people while Swedish was the language of the administration—was encouraged by the Russians for the same reason. A Finnish-speaking intelligentsia began to emerge and of inconvertible importance for the future development of the arts—the Finnish writer Juhani Aho, the painter Pekka Halonen (who had studied in Paris and made the acquaintance of Gauguin) and the composer Jean Sibelius, the latter's house in the colony being built for him by one of the foremost architects of National Romanticism, Lars Sonck. There was the patriotic pageant in Helsinki in 1893, which presented "Tableaux from the Past" with music by Sibelius, the concluding episode of which was called "Finland Awakes". Because of the sentiments it was designed to evoke, performance of the music was banned in Finland. It is now well known as the tone-poem *Finlandia*.

There were many other similar episodes and alliances, all inspired in one way or another by the urge that was driving artists of the arts, yet all coloured by movements essentially international in their origin. Of them Mr Boulton Smith gives a comprehensive account, though perhaps with too much attention to the work of some painters and sculptors who departed far less than the architects and craftsmen from the conventions of their day; only their subject-matter had the symbolic significance of being related increasingly to peasant life and to the typical Finnish landscape.

The greatest achievements of the movement, apart from Sibelius's music, were not in the fine arts but in architecture. In 1889 and again in 1890 Sparre and Gallen-Kallela together made a tour of Karelia in eastern Finland, the remote region in which Lönnermark had collected much of the folk material for his *Kalevala* epic. They believed that the most truly indigenous Finnish culture was to be found there. They were, as it happens, mistaken in this; the geometrically patterned Karelian embroideries were the remnants of a Byzantine tradition and the Karelian log-houses were as typically north-Russian as Finnish. Nevertheless, the region retained an authentic primitiveness which

was concerned—was at the Paris Exhibition of 1890. The official policy was that Finland should be displayed abroad as Russian, but after vigorous resistance to this, and after the Russians had tried to prevent any kind of separate Finnish participation, a compromise was reached whereby the Finnish industrial exhibits were shown with the Russian, but for the art Finland was allowed to design and erect her own pavilion.

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sculpture; for Michelangelo, they were often technical renderings in

indicating complex measurements for the stonemason. The American sculptor David Smith, who worked in welded iron, often drew directly on to the studio floor: "I follow no set procedure in starting a sculpture," he writes. "Some works start out as chain drawings, some as floor with cut-out forms working into the drawings. When it reaches the stage that the sculpture can be unrolled, it is welded into position upright. . . . Sometimes sculptures start with no drawing at all. I try for intuition, never refer to his drawings until after the sculpture was finished.

Since every inquiry produces results that are relative to the terms in which the inquiry sets up its problems, it is a regrettable defect of the text that it lacks any real strategy of presentation which would make the whole thing hold together. Visually, the book is very provocative, the confrontation of images suggesting all sorts of parallels, congruences and deviations.

What we are given in the text, however, is a picture, a series of what we can already see for ourselves—that the Christ Child has been transferred in the sculpture to his Mother's left arm, for example. No "case" is made, no conclusions drawn, and the last test—the quality of the details—the author does not succeed in making it all come alive. I suspect that the reason the details remain inert is because attention is never focused on aesthetic issues. The most interesting topics related to sculpture—problems are not explored. Little is made, for instance, of Constructivism, the modern style that first emerged in Russia and changed the dialectic of art history by rejecting the traditional conventions of carving and modelling. References are made, only very occasionally, to critical issues.

The often-declared as well as implicit recognition of sculpture as an object is an important attitude towards sculpture, reflected particularly in the more analytical drawings reproduced in this book. It is not, of course, a new attitude, but never before has the attempt to divorce form, cult, symbolism, and subject been so explicitly recognized.

Considering the Copernican revolution that has occurred in sculpture in the twentieth century, and con-

sidering that more than half of the works illustrated here were made during the past thirty years, surely the book cannot, as the course, any more than paper money can never be converted into gold. What the author has done, instead, is to weave together a thin thread of themes, intended to link together a different world from Michelangelo's to Oldenburg: madonna and child, drapery and the torso, open forms and constructions, sited sculpture and open-air monuments. The difficulty is that without some sense of art history, and his elaborate theories, token remarks such as "the victory and defeat of continuously changing artistic imperatives, one is led, by such loosely ordered categories, to make unit-clusters of artists that have no particular sense of cultural relevance. What is not impelled to choose the salient example.

The section on sited sculpture and open-air monuments is a case in point. Sited sculpture is a category of some significance since the relation of sculpture to environment has been the great preoccupation of many modern sculptors and has generated, in recent years, radical new forms of sculptural activity. Strachan chooses to include in it official examples of contemporary sculpture designed for specific buildings or sites: Barbara Hepworth's memorial to Dag Hammarskjöld in United Nations Plaza; Oskar Zank's bronze was memorial "The Destroyed City" at Leuvehaven Quay in Rotterdam; Emilio Greco's "Pinochio" designed for a public park in Colliodi—a minor monument to a great man, one. While including "Pinochio," he omits any reference to a major work like Robert Smithson's "Spiral Jetty," a spiralling embankment of 5,500 tons of boulders and earth constructed in the flat reddish mud of the Great Salt Lake in 1970. (There is, moreover, a published book of Smithson's drawings based entirely on the theme of the spiral.)

Earthwork projects are a completely new concept in the history of sculpture, intending to "create a new landscape made of sculpture rather than decorated by sculpture." And since few people ever make the pilgrimage necessary to see earthworks at first hand, the role of photographic reports from the site has taken on extended significance, entering into a dialogue with artistic ideas in mutually reinforcing ways. If one's declared subject is the dialectical relationship between three-dimensional works and two-dimensional art, it seems to me that one cannot ignore this whole new dimension represented by the constant interplay between sculpture and photography. Maps of the site and photographs which show its construction.

Strachan's way of perceiving art within a tightly drawn set of technical and thematic conventions seems to limit the level of sophistication he brings to encounters with modern works such as Christo's packaging of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, or his wrapping of a section of the Australian coastline.

Whether such projects represent more than a striving after novelty, and whether, when they are seen, they have cultural validity, it is hard to say. However, a drawing by Henry Moore—who seems to have anticipated most new developments in art—called "A dead-up object" looking up at a dead-up object" (dated 1962) makes one inclined to believe that modern sculpture, and its various forms of sculpture, perhaps to be polluted or derelict areas or dilapidated buildings, replacing ugliness by intriguing mystery.

To imply that Christo's art has anything to do with a Henry Moore drawing and is somehow, vaguely, validated by it, is certainly wide of the mark, as is the suggestion that his wrappings may function as a way of coping up polluted areas or dilapidated buildings. (One need not have any understanding of the artist's intentions to know that the Australian coastline is not polluted and that the Chicago Museum is not derelict.)

A convincing account is one in which everything mentioned gets suitably connected with everything else, and in which everything that ought to get mentioned gets mentioned. The meaning function and the value of art are mediated by traditions and ideological forces which explain, interpret and legitimize art practice. It is this kind of knowledge, in the end, that sets apart the critic from the commentator, and that helps any of us to distinguish good art from bad or, for that matter, from a spurious cold masked up cunning one needs to have these days, given the equivocal nature of so much art.

By Suzi Gablik

W. J. STRACHAN:
Towards Sculpture
Drawings and Maquettes from Rodin to Oldenburg
437 Illustrations, 9 in colour
263pp. Thames and Hudson. £16.

Since drawing, compared with sculpture, has always required a much less sophisticated apparatus, it is significant that artists, from the young architects, Gessellius, Lindgren and Saarinen, designed for their own occupation in 1902 (and which Mr Boulton Smith justly describes as "the pioneer place of Art Planning" and "a treasure-house of the best in Finnish art-nouveau design") might, as regards the buildings, have been designed by Baillie Scott, except for a Karelian vernacular detail, and as regards much of the furnishing by Charles Rennie Mackintosh himself.

But this is to anticipate matters, because before it became an aesthetic movement the Finnish fin-de-siècle renaissance of the arts was a political one, and as a result of this also a linguistic one. Mr Boulton Smith summarizes briefly but clearly the tug-of-war between Swedish cultural influence and Russian political domination out of which the nationalistic Finnish art movement emerged. He is compelled to go back to 1809 when Finland, having been part of Sweden since the fourteenth century, was captured by Russia and declared a Grand Duchy of the Russian empire under the personal rule of the Tsar. The capital was transferred from Åbo to Helsinki to remove it from Swedish influence, and at first the language of the majority of ordinary people while Swedish was the language of the administration—was encouraged by the Russians for the same reason. A Finnish-speaking intelligentsia began to emerge and of inconvertible importance for the future development of the arts—the Finnish writer Juhani Aho, the painter Pekka Halonen (who had studied in Paris and made the acquaintance of Gauguin) and the composer Jean Sibelius, the latter's house in the colony being built for him by one of the foremost architects of National Romanticism, Lars Sonck. There was the patriotic pageant in Helsinki in 1893, which presented "Tableaux from the Past" with music by Sibelius, the concluding episode of which was called "Finland Awakes". Because of the sentiments it was designed to evoke, performance of the music was banned in Finland. It is now well known as the tone-poem *Finlandia*.

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